

Carrizo Plain National Monument Advisory Committee (MAC)
October 30, 2010, meeting notes

Attendees:

MAC – Neil Havlik, Bob Pavlik, Carl Twisselman, Ellen Cypher, Ray Hatch, Jim Patterson, Charlotte Taylor (for Ray Watson).

BLM: Johna Hurl, Tim Smith, Kathy Sharum, Ryan Cooper, David Christy, Judy Sackett.

Public: Cal French, Lodema Hatch, Craig Deutsche, Dorie Giragosian, Kathleen Buttke, Larry Buttke.

Tim Smith, Bakersfield Field Office manager, welcomed attendees. Since the MAC last met, the Record of Decision was signed for the Resource Management Plan (RMP), work has been completed using American Recovery and Reinvestment Act funds and youth have been involved in Carrizo projects.

Resource Management Plan implementation

Johna Hurl, Monument manager, had a presentation on implementation actions for the RMP.

BLM has held internal meetings and with Managing Partners. After all the implementation items (245) were identified they were categorized by program. Understanding that they are all priorities, they were placed in categories based on when they might be implemented. After that the highest priorities were identified for the next few years. These items didn't include usual day-to-day activities. The list includes:

- Biology
 - Core areas for Threatened and Endangered (T&E) species
 - Special status animal species
 - Vernal pools
 - Land acquisition
- Botany
 - Rare plants
 - Native plants
 - Noxious weeds
- Research
 - Data management
 - GIS layers
 - Archive research data
 - Make research available
- Grazing
 - Compliance with grazing guidelines
 - Monitor/study grazing use
- Recreation
 - Signing
 - Sign plans
 - Amenity fees
 - Expand education center
 - Overlooks

- Education/outreach
 - Partnerships/gateway communities
- Travel management
 - Travel management plan
 - Road closures
 - Reduce illegal off-highway vehicle use
- Cultural
 - Painted Rock permit system
 - Baseline data
 - Monitoring
 - Mitigation/stabilization
- Geo/Paleo
 - Baseline data development for seismic areas
 - Inventory fossil areas
- Minerals
 - Implement Standard Operating Procedures
 - Manage leases
 - Reduce habitat fragmentation
 - Remove unused facilities
 - Plug abandoned wells
 - Inspection – annually or more often if there are problems

ARRA Projects

Johna Hurl gave an overview of projects done with ARRA funding:

A house and other structures at the Selby Ranch house were demolished and removed through \$125,000 in ARRA funds.

Cleaning up this site decreases the chance of the public getting injured or harmed while visiting the Carrizo.

The cleaned area can now provide habitat for the special status species in the area such as the blunt-nosed leopard lizard, giant kangaroo rat and San Joaquin kit fox.

Using \$150,000 in ARRA funds, a crew of six to 10 workers from a firm based in San Luis Obispo County spent about three weeks grading and graveling the Selby road.

This project improves the surface of the dirt road so that visitors are able to access the campground during the winter months, which is the high-use season.

Before the road improvements, visitors would often drive out into a field and get stuck, causing damage to the surrounding habitat.

Hundreds of acres of habitat for threatened and endangered species were restored using \$204,000 in ARRA funds.

Five hundred acres of native grassland and shrubland were restored and fences were constructed to help restore unique Alvord oak habitat.

MAC members and BLM staff discussed the federal budget process and how work at the Monument is funded.

Implementation Priorities

Biology

Ellen Cypher said the core areas for T&E species need to be the top priority. Kathy Sharum, BLM biologist, said students are mapping giant kangaroo rat precincts using satellite imagery. Neil Havlik asked about the decision process on actions for T&E species. Kathy Sharum said the RMP contains a range of options and BLM would discuss options with the Managing Partners. Johna said information is in the RMP Conservation Target Tables.

Neil Havlik said he is concerned about the condition of springs and they should be another priority. Jim Patterson said there were comments from the public about quail populations and springs and asked if there should be a water category. Johna Hurl said riparian areas, including protecting springs, are a priority. BLM has been removing tamarisk and other non-native species. BLM wants to also study water quality in Soda Lake to gather data on the impact of off-site activities. Neil Havlik said BLM should do physical work to protect springs ahead of data gathering. Kathy Sharum said Lawson Spring will be looked at as a priority.

Bob Pavlik said there is some overlap on projects such as recreation and biology. Neil Havlik said he prefers to see actual work rather than studies. Jim Patterson said some areas are data deficient and BLM could make better decisions if it had 15 years of data. He suggested BLM might get funding from off-site activities that could affect the Monument. Data gathering and project work need to be balanced. The priority list is dynamic and multiple items will have work going concurrently. Carl Twisselman said a priority should be work that will improve conditions on the ground. Ellen Cypher said baseline data needs to be gathered such as Soda Lake water quality. She suggested friends groups might to some physical work such as fencing springs. Cal French said specific projects give people a goal such as eradicating yellow starthistle from a certain area each year. Tim Smith said there area annual workload measures and a report at the end of the year on what was accomplished.

Grazing

Neil Havlik asked if Section 15 grazing leases would be managed like the leases for vegetation management. Johna Hurl said there has been a significant amount of research on the valley floor and some attention is shifting to the foothills and mountains to answer questions about grazing.

Carl Twisselman said Section 15 leasees have some legal rights. BLM needs to justify decisions and there is an appeal process. The same grazing standards and guidelines apply.

Cal French asked if the size of the Carrizo is considered. Carl Twisselman said range monitors look at remaining dry residue.

Recreation

Neil Havlik said BLM needs to look at costs incurred in a fee system. It can cost more to collect fees than the agency receives. If members of the public pay a fee it raises their expectation and could increase liability.

Tim Smith said a fee doesn't change liability the key is whether there is a facility. Fees charged need to be appropriate to the service provided. The local BLM office keeps all the fees it collects. Areas that charge fees tend to get more families while people that create problems go to free areas. BLM will develop a Business Plan and present it to the MAC before going to the Recreation Resource Advisory Council.

Neil Havlik said there should be some education and outreach on the history of oil in the area, maybe a display on Highway 166. He also has a location for a San Andreas Fault trail.

Travel Management

Carl Twisselman asked about access to inholdings. Johna Hurl said BLM hasn't had that many requests on the Monument.

Johna Hurl said the Painted Rock tour system will go live this year and will be refined during the guided tour season. Visitors can get permits through recreation.gov. Lodema Hatch said the gateway communities can be a source of information.

Neil Havlik asked about the issue raised previously of restoring Native American rock art. Johna Hurl said it has been discussed, but there are legal issues.

Neil Havlik asked about historical baseline data, if areas or the whole monument might receive a special status. Johna Hurl said there is work being done on establishing a National Historic District. Data is being gathered at the larger sites.

Public Comment

Cal French said he likes the thoroughness of the spreadsheets. Goals need to be set to evaluate progress. At the next MAC meeting he would like a report on successes and projects completed.

Minerals

Tim Smith said Vintage Petroleum would need to prepare an Environmental Impact Statement to do exploration on the Monument. Vintage proposed trading 30,000 acres of mineral lease on the Carrizo for 27-30,000 acres outside. There are some issues with the proposal. An exchange would need to have lands of equal value. There are known reserves on the lands outside the Carrizo but not on the Monument. Some lands proposed normally would be put up for competitive lease. BLM has had meetings with Vintage, but nothing has been decided. An exchange would take a minimum of five years and could have issues with valuation. Another possibility is that a third party might buy the mineral rights from Vintage.

Neil Havlik asked whether there was any evidence that the Vintage mineral rights lands actually held oil or gas. Tim Smith said Vintage has said some data indicates there could be resources.

Next Meeting

Agenda to include final spreadsheets, travel management plan, FY 2010 successes. To be scheduled in March/April.